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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, You have been good to us beyond our deserving, surrounding us with the beauties of the Earth and the glories of the skies. Make our Senators, this day, alert to Your providential movements. If their minds are closed to Your truth, open them. If their hearts are hardened, stir them. If their ears are deaf to the cries of the needy, unstop them. Revive in them a desire to establish new thresholds of hope for our Nation and world. Lord, be near to them all their days, making them lie down in the green pastures of Your peace and leading them by the still waters of Your wisdom.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JIM WEBB led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 9, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator

from the Commonwealth of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WEBB thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1105, the appropriations bill. This legislation is open for debate on the finite list of amendments that were entered into last week. There will be a series of rollcall votes beginning around 5:30 p.m. today. The votes will start at 5:30. I do not know how many we will have, but it appears we will have four votes at that time.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 542

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I believe S. 542 is due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the title of the bill for the second time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 542) to repeal the provision of law that provides automatic pay adjustments for Members of Congress.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings on this legislation at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bill will be placed on the calendar.

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we came very close last week to passing the

critically important Omnibus appropriations bill. At the last minute, one Senator changed their mind, leaving us one vote short of the 60 needed to stop the filibuster. A decision was made, though, later that night to allow more debate, and we agreed on the next day, Friday, to a finite list of amendments. These amendments are the only ones in order to this piece of legislation.

It is important we did that. It was important to do because it is important this legislation be passed. It is necessary to continue the process because of the importance of this legislation. It will create jobs, expand access to education, and protect our neighborhoods. It will provide the Consumer Product Safety Commission with the resources necessary to ensure that products such as toys are safe. This is for families and, of course, their children. This legislation will help families avoid foreclosure and refinance into affordable mortgages. It will help the Department of Justice and the Department of Treasury fight terrorism, drug trafficking, and crime in our communities.

It will improve our environment with investments in the Department of Interior and other agencies tasked with reducing pollution. It will keep us healthier with funds to fight ailments and diseases. This legislation will educate and prepare our workforce, promote science and technology, and create jobs. And, of course, it will help rebuild our crumbling roads, bridges, and tunnels, and other projects that are so vitally needed at this time to create jobs. The Omnibus bill provides smart, targeted investments in our country and its future, and it reflects sound compromise and cooperation between Democrats and Republicans dating back into last year.

We have not yet reached the finish line on this legislation, but we are close. Today we will move forward by debating a number of amendments, as we continue moving forward toward passing this bill.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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